(c) the details of genome research underway in respect of other agricultural products?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL). (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The findings of Rice Genome Research by Indian scientists have been used to identify genes which may contribute to yield by its improvement or curtailing losses for the same. The Rice Genome has been shown to have total of 37,544 genes, of which 1443 genes have been identified by Indian scientists in the region sequenced by them. Subsequently, multi-institutional functional genomics projects on rice have been launched by the Government to characterize and validate the genes controlling the yield, grain quality, salinity and insect and disease resistance. Some genetic markers have also been identified for high grain number in the panicle of rice and this is being used in the marker assisted breeding of rice varieties.

(c) Multi-institutional network mode research projects on structural and functional genomics have been supported in other crops. Recently, India became partner to the International Solanaceous Genome Initiative involving ten countries. A similar initiative has been taken on sugarcane genomics with the aim of developing Expressed Sequence Tags (EST) markers for biotic and abiotic stresses. In addition, we are also working on coffee genome project under which more than 150 molecular markers have been developed for germplasm characterization.

**Setting up of a Rural Technology Centre in Jhalawar District of Rajasthan**

3148. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether State Government of Rajasthan has sent any proposal on the 24th March, 2004 to Department of Bio-Technology for setting up a Rural Technology Centre in Jhalawar District in Rajasthan;

(b) if so, whether Government have, till date, sanctioned any amount for the proposed project to enable the implementing agency to initiate the necessary action in this regard;

(c) whether any detailed feasibility report of the project has been received/ submitted to Government by the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee; and

(d) if so, when?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) No Sir. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India has not received any proposal from the State Government of Rajasthan for setting up a Rural Technology Centre in Jhalawar District of Rajasthan. Therefore, no budget has been sanctioned for the purpose. The Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has also not submitted any feasibility report of the project to the Government.

**Package to boost biotech sector**

3149. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the strategies proposed to boost India's biotech sector;

(b) whether there is a proposal for a Rs. 1,000 crore package aiming at creating 50 centres of excellence across the country;

(c) whether it is a fact that there is a crunch of skilled scientists to take up research and development activities; and

(d) whether there are any special schemes to retain biotech scientists in the country and encourage Indian scientists working overseas to return?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) The Department of Biotechnology has formulated a Draft National Biotechnology Development Strategy, which is a comprehensive roadmap for addressing cross-cutting issues related to human resource development, infrastructure strengthening, promotion of industry and trade, setting up of biotech parks, regulatory mechanism and public awareness, and an action plan for specific sub-sectors. The strategic action plan will direct the future priorities and activities in different sectors of biotechnology. The Draft Strategy was put on the website of Department of Biotechnology for eliciting views and comments. A large number of responses have been received from students, scientists, industries, research organizations, NGO's etc. and also and general public. In addition, consultation with Industry and NGO's have also been held. The National Biotechnology Development Strategy has been finalized after incorporating the comments/ suggestions received. The Draft Note for approval by cabinet is under inter-ministerial consultation.

(b) The Department of Biotechnology proposes to support Centres of excellence in specific areas of biotechnology in the country, with an objective to enhance the innovation ability of the institutions with well-developed